Luke rescued Willis from a couple of mob enforcers who were beating Stryker to death, but the incident opened Reva's eyes to the kind of business Willis was in, so she dumped him -- and Stryker blamed Luke.

Their friendship was over, but Luke's relationship with Reva was just getting started, and they were planning to get married until Stryker secretly framed Luke with planted narcotics.

Luke went to jail, and a seemingly supportive Willis started cozying up to Reva with promises he could help Luke somehow. But Stryker still had dangerous enemies, and some of them killed Reva when Stryker used her as a shield during a car chase.

Luke was obsessed with revenge after that. I've been there myself, and while vengeance consumes you in the long run, it can also serve as fuel. Dreams of revenge helped keep Luke alive in Seagate Prison where corrupt officials like guard captain Rackham and his lackey, Quirt, abused Luke viciously...

YOUR APPROACH TO PENOLOGY IS AN UNUSUAL ONE, MR. QUIRT. I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS IT FURTHER.
UNFORTUNATELY, YOU'RE GOING TO BE SO BUSY PACKING --AND LEAVING--I'M AFRAID WE WON'T HAVE THE TIME!
HUH?!

...until their new, reform-minded boss, Warden Stuart, came along. Quirt was fired, Rackham demoted, but Rackham stayed on at the prison and swore he'd make Luke pay.

AND SO A NEW ADMINISTRATION TAKES HOLD IN SEAGATE PENITENTIARY...
PRISON DOCS MAKIN' HOUSE CALLS?
THAT WARDEN STUART IS A REFORMER.
I'M DR. BURSTEIN, LUCAS.
FRIENDS CALL ME NOAH.
GOT SPECIAL PERMISSION TO SEE YOU.

Better news arrived in the form of Noah Burstein, a medical genius who believed in Luke's innocence and offered him a chance at parole in exchange for participating in a dangerous experiment...

Unfortunately, Bumstein's cell-augmenting biochemical experiment went bad when Rackham sabotaged Luke's electrified chemical bath, causing an explosion. Luke survived, but he accidentally injured Rackham while defending himself. Afraid he'd killed him, a suddenly superstrong Luke pounded his way through the prison walls, ran into a hail of bullets from the guards, and fell off a cliff. Seagate officials assumed he had died...

YET, ONLY YARDS FROM WHERE THE GUARDS PEER, STRONG CURRENTS THRUST A FORM, LAZURUS-LIKE, TO THE SURFACE.
T-THOUGHT I WAS DEAD...! I FELT THOSE BULLETS HIT ME!
BUT THERE'S ONLY THESE BRUISES!
MY WHOLE BODY'S JUST LIKE MY FISTS...HARD! HARD AS STEEL!
DOC'S MACHINE WORKED ON MY BODY'S CELLS ALL RIGHT... CHANGED 'EM SO I AIN'T HUMAN ANYMORE!

...but he'd actually been reborn.

YEAH! OUTFIT'S KINDA HOKEY... BUT SO WHAT?
ALL PART OF THE SUPER-HERO SCENE.
AN' THIS WAY WHEN I USE MY POWERS, IT'S GONNA SEEM NATURAL.
A LITTLE PROMOTION WORK AN' I'M IN BUSINESS!
LUKE CAGE HERO FOR HIRE

Still wanting revenge on Stryker, he made his way back to New York where he adopted the prison-inspired alias, Luke Cage, and went into business as a costumed Hero for Hire, giving him a way to use his powers openly and make a living at the same time.

Kind of a showy outfit -- he cobbled it together from second-hand escape artist gear, another ironic nod to his old life -- but I think Luke was tired of hiding, and the flashy costume helped him make an impression to kick-start his business. Plus, he somehow managed to look manly in yellow silk, which just might be his greatest super-power.

--UNTIL NOW NOBODY'S QUICK TO MESS WITH WILLIS STRYKER--
A.K.A., DIAMOND BACK!
THEY'VE ALL LEARNED I STRIKE FASTER WITH MY KNIVES THAN ANY RATTLER!

The hero business brought Luke into conflict with his old friend Willis, now a costumed criminal called Diamondback. His specialty was gimmicky blades, one of which literally blew up in his face when he tried to kill Luke, so Reva was finally avenged.

LET'S GO, CAGE! YOU'RE ONE OF US, NOW!!
YOU KNOW, TORCH!
POOR YOUNG'S TOO WANTED TO WORK WITH THE BEN GRIMM, NOT THE THING!
BUT, NOW THAT I'M, UH, OVER THERE--
--REPLACED BY POWER MAN!

Before long, Luke started calling himself "Power Man" as a publicity gimmick to drum up business -- and maybe it worked, because he even landed a job with the Fantastic Four as a depowered Thing's replacement, though the job ended once Thing was back in action.

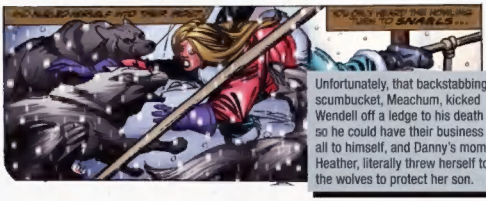
Luke lasted a lot longer with the Defenders. He eventually quit, said the gig was too weird, but he made some good friends there -- including a foreign idealist (Red Guardian), a mystic (Dr. Strange), a sheltered rich guy (Nighthawk), and a newcomer from an otherworldly warrior culture (Valkyrie). In retrospect, it's like his Defenders days were training wheels for his much longer partnership with a gentleman of the iron-fisted persuasion...

So yeah, "Iron Fist" sounds like a corny old B-movie, but the name wasn't Danny's idea -- turns out he's the latest in a long line of Iron Fists. It's the title they award their best warrior in K'un-Lun, a magic city in another dimension. Sounds crazy, I know, but I been there, it's for real.

IN FACT, I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND WHY YOU DIDN'T WANT TO TALK IT OUT TO BEHOLDING HEATHER AND DANNY...
WHY I SHOVED UP TRAILING ALONG AFTER ALL?
WHERE'S THE MYSTERY? IT'S PERFECTLY CLEAR WHAT HAPPENED!
--AND BACKSTABBING SCUMBUCKET MEACHUM!
WHAT ARE FRIENDS FOR, IF NOT TO HOUSE BACKSTABBING MEACHUMS?
YOUR MISSION FAILED. YOU'LL CLIMB THAT.

Danny's dad, Wendell, hero-worshipped ex-Iron Fist, Orson Randall, as a kid. Wendell eventually made it to K'un-Lun, ruffled some feathers by getting adopted into the royal family and fightin' his way to the top o' the warrior heap. But when he got his shot to become the next Iron Fist, he skipped back to Earth instead.

Got rich, got married, then he got restless. Decided to go back to his magic city, take his wife and kid with him, and his business partner, Harold Meachum, insisted on coming along.



Unfortunately, that backstabbing scumbucket, Meachum, kicked Wendell off a ledge to his death so he could have their business all to himself, and Danny's mom, Heather, literally threw herself to the wolves to protect her son.

BEFORE THAT HAPPENED THOUGH, COLLEEN MANAGED TO PUT THROUGH A PHONE CALL TO MAX'S
NOT THAT HER TELEVISION SET WAS MUCH GOOD, MIND YOU, ONLY OPENED AN EYE BIONIC RIGHT AWAY...
THOOM!

CONFRONTED BY A BEWILDERED JURY, THAT SOON WILL BOTH BE HOSPITAL WITH SKULL CRACKED WITHSTANDING
CASE HAD COME WITHIN A HEARTBEAT OF KILLING HER.
LORD, NO-- I WON'T HAVE IT, DON'T!
I DO WE'LL SAY LAST TIME--MICHAEL

Heck of a first impression Luke made -- but even then, you could tell he wasn't a bad guy, that he didn't want to hurt anyone. Once he told us his story, we helped him save his friends and prove his innocence.

Me, I wasn't doing so hot with the name-clearing -- a slime called Bushmaster had evidence of how Willis framed me back in the day, but he was using it to blackmail me, and he kidnapped my friends, Noah Burstein and Claire Temple, for extra leverage. Doing Bushmaster's dirty work put me up against Danny, his detective girlfriend, Misty Knight, and her samurai partner, Colleen Wing... and I damn near killed all three of 'em 'fore I came to my senses.

Free at last, free at last, with a little help from Danny's lawyer, Jeryn Hogarth. Got me a job workin' for Misty and Colleen at their Nightwing Restorations agency, but then Jeryn helped set up me and Danny in our own business...

HOW DO YOU FEEL, LUCAS, NOW THAT YOU'RE A FREE MAN?
WELL, I GUESS THIS MONKEY SUIT BEATS A PRISON UNIFORM--
--BUT IT DON'T BEAT IT BY MUCH!

Heroes for Hire! Converting Luke's old solo agency into a partnership turned out to be the best idea Jeryn ever had, and Luke turned out to be the best friend I ever had. New York was still alien to me then, but with Luke as a guide, it finally started to feel like home. He taught me about the world, showed me the way it really was, and he never stopped fighting to make it better.

Thought Danny was clueless at first, but Jeryn got it right when he said it fancier: "guileless." Kid had nothing to hide, no agenda, wasn't working any angle. He could've retired on his dad's fortune or stayed top dog in K'un-Lun, but instead he runs around fightin' crime in ballet slippers, riskin' his fool neck to help people, me included. Crazy? You bet. But the world could sure use a lot more of that kind'a crazy, ya know?

Made a lotta real interestin' friends in that business -- like this slick vigilante, el Aguila, sort of a cross between Zorro & Electro...

...or the Knightress, a sweet, sad, @#%*-ed up lady who chucked what was left of her super-hero career to help out some kids in trouble. We were tight with her later on when she was plain old Jessica Jones, private investigator.

One thing I've learned about life on Earth: nothing lasts forever, especially the good times. Heroes for Hire shut down when I supposedly died (evil plants sort of faked my death, long story).

Luke was wrongly blamed for my "murder," and while he eventually cleared his name and I came back, the experience left him in a dark place. Darker outfits, darker attitude, no more "Power Man," just Cage. He froze me out for a while, mostly worked alone, like he was afraid everything would get taken away from him again if he let himself get comfortable.

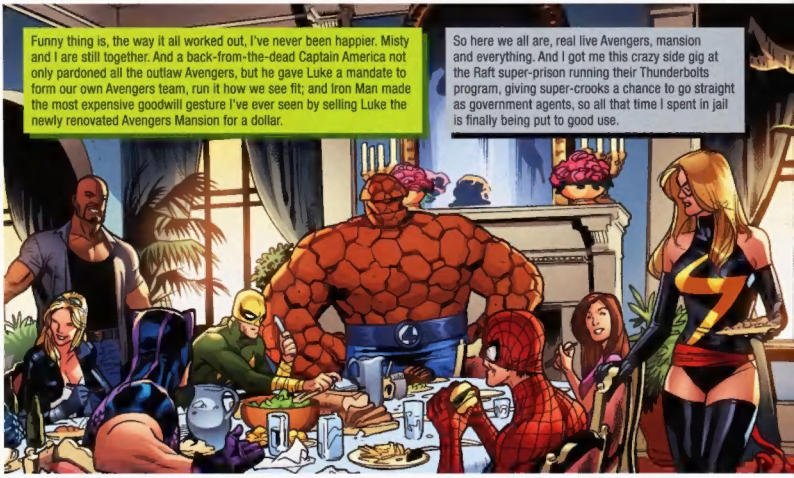
Took some time, but Danny dragged me back into full-on super-heroing. For a while we had ourselves a bigger, badder Heroes for Hire full of super-folk, but everybody quit after Stark-Fujikawa took over the company and corporate types started making changes, like firing the group's ex-cons.

Kind'a got bit by the group bug I guess, though, because when Captain America asked me to join the Avengers, I actually said yes. 'Course, you don't say no to Cap, but it was still pretty freakin' surreal -- all those years scrapin' by, and now here I was in the big leagues.

Makes a man think about settling down. Me and Jessica Jones were together by then, and before long we got married. Had ourselves a baby too, named her Danielle, which is sloppy and sentimental as all hell, I know, but there's nobody more like family to us than her uncle Danny, so deal with it.

The feds started regulating super heroes, including its own pet, government-controlled Avengers led by Iron Man after Cap died. So some of us formed our own outlaw version of the team, fought the power. Best thing about it was Danny joined up, Cage and Fist together again.

So maybe it wasn't sensible, joining Luke's new Avengers and renewing our old Heroes for Hire partnership when I already had so much on my plate: starting the Thunder Dojo martial arts school, getting drawn into K'un-Lun's politics, bonding with my fellow "Immortal Weapons" from other magical cities, losing most of my dad's fortune to my would-be slayer, Zhou Cheng.


Funny thing is, the way it all worked out, I've never been happier. Misty and I are still together. And a back-from-the-dead Captain America not only pardoned all the outlaw Avengers, but he gave Luke a mandate to form our own Avengers team, run it how we see fit; and Iron Man made the most expensive goodwill gesture I've ever seen by selling Luke the newly renovated Avengers Mansion for a dollar.
So here we all are, real live Avengers, mansion and everything. And I got me this crazy side gig at the Raft super-prison running their Thunderbolts program, giving super-crooks a chance to go straight as government agents, so all that time I spent in jail is finally being put to good use.

Been a long hard road, and I never would've thought it would lead here, with Danny and me becoming big shot establishment types after so many years as small-timers, outsiders. Both of us practically settled down now too. But whatever comes next, I'm proud and grateful to be facing it with all my friends, and with my family: my wife, our daughter, and my kung-fu brother from another mother, the Iron Fist.

THE READING CHRONOLOGY!

POWER MAN & IRON FIST

Luke & Danny have punched and kicked their way through hundreds of Marvel comics since their debuts in 1972 and 1974, respectively. This partial list includes some of their key stories currently in print.

1 Essential Power Man and Iron Fist Vol. 1 TPB
Collects *Power Man and Iron Fist* #50-72 & 74-75.
By Chris Claremont, Ed Hannigan, Mary Jo Duffy, Steven Grant, Bob Layton, John Byrne, Mike Zeck, Lee Elias, Trevor Von Eeden, Marie Severin, Kerry Gammill, Alan Weiss & more
Featuring the debuts of the PM & IF team, Heroes for Hire and el Aguila, plus guest appearances by Colleen Wing, Misty Knight, and the X-Men, not to mention Iron Fist's harrowing return to K'un-Lun.

2 Essential Power Man and Iron Fist Vol. 2 TPB
Collects *Power Man and Iron Fist* #76-100 & *Daredevil* #178.
By Mary Jo Duffy, Dennis O'Neil, Kurt Busiek, Mike W. Barr, Frank Miller, Steven Grant, Mark Bright, Kerry Gammill, Denys Cown, Keith Pollard, Greg LaRocque, Ernie Chan & more
Featuring guest appearances by Daredevil, Moon Knight, the Daughters of the Dragon, and el Aguila, vs. the villainy of Constrictor, Sabretooth, Unus, Chemistro, Shades & Comanche, Fera, and Master Khan, plus PM&IF's landmark 100th issue.

3 New Avengers Vol. 6 (Revolution) TPB
Collects *New Avengers* #26-31.
By Brian Michael Bendis, Leinil Francis Yu & Alex Maleev
Featuring the formation of the outlaw Avengers by Luke Cage, Iron Fist, Dr. Strange, and friends, plus a fateful meeting between Hawkeye and the Scarlet Witch, the return of Echo, and the strange debut of the all-new Ronin. Guest-starring Iron Man's Mighty Avengers.

4 New Avengers Vol. 7 (The Trust) TPB
Collects *New Avengers* #32-37 and *New Avengers Annual* #2.
By Brian Michael Bendis, Leinil Francis Yu & Carlo Pagulayan
Featuring the Hood's new super-criminal army, plus Venom-like symbiote monsters, shape-shifting Skrull spies, and guest appearances by Jessica Jones, Tigra, and the Mighty Avengers.

Writer: Sean McQuaid
Designer: Rodolfo Muraguchi